

2 Tennesseans Buy Esquire; To Continue Its 'Tradition'

By CHARLOTTE EVANS

Esquire Magazine has been sold to two men from Knoxville, Tenn., who said yesterday that they would continue its "tradition of literary excellence."

They said it would be aimed at "educated, sophisticated, active, upscale, career-oriented males 25 to 45 years old," who might need guidance in a world in which "the rules of society have completely changed."

The new owners are Phillip Moffitt, 32 years old, who will be the president and editor, and Christopher Whittle, 31, who will be chairman of the board and publisher. The purchase price was not disclosed.

Clay S. Felker, the former publisher of New York Magazine, who was editor and publisher of Esquire, and who bought Esquire with the help of Associated Newspapers Ltd. of London, said in a statement: "We wish them luck. We trust that the magazine we are turning over to them will continue to uphold Esquire's honorable tradition and bright promise."

About his own plans, Mr. Felker said only: "I will be making a statement about my own future plans in due course."

5 Months of Negotiations

A friend of Mr. Felker said that he doubted reports that Mr. Felker was considering or had accepted a job from a major film company to seek out film properties.

"He has made a purchase there," the friend said a few days ago, referring to a weekly shopping paper in California that Mr. Felker had bought, "but I doubt that he is going to change his residence."

The purchase of Esquire from Associated by the 13-30 Corporation, a Knoxville publishing house, half of which is owned by Mr. Moffitt and Mr. Whittle and half by the Bonnier Newspaper Group of Sweden, was completed Saturday afternoon after five months of negotiations. Mr. Moffitt announced the sale at a news conference yesterday at the Boardroom Club, 280 Park Avenue.

No purchase price was disclosed — "that is the agreement of the parties," Mr. Whittle said — but the new owners, he continued, have "more than two-thirds of the stock while Associated will continue to hold 'less than one-third.'"

Asked whether 13-30 had assumed Esquire's debts — believed to be in the millions — he said only that "all creditors and liabilities have been handled in some shape, form or fashion." He said that 13-30 would invest \$5 million in the magazine in the next few years.

There will be some changes. This summer, Esquire will once again be published monthly, instead of twice a month, and the newsstand price will rise from \$1.25 to \$1.50.

Men's fashion will receive more emphasis. The owners, who are bachelors, appeared at the news conference in white shirts — the curly-haired Mr. Moffitt with a dark brown tie, Mr. Whittle, whose hair was blown dry, with a dark blue suit and a brown and white checked tie.

participatory sports, men's health and on what women think about men.

Mr. Moffitt said that Esquire would be for "today's American male — a man without a context." That man, he said, who grew up with defined roles about careers, success, women, his country and society, now finds himself in "an age of male uncertainty."

"In no way," said Mr. Moffitt, will Esquire become "a skin magazine; it will not be macho or chauvinistic."

The owners said they expected the writing, editing and marketing staffs to stay largely intact.

Mr. Moffitt and Mr. Whittle said that they had tried to buy Esquire before, and were "one week away" from doing so in 1977 when Mr. Felker bought it.

Mr. Moffitt and Mr. Whittle, who were roommates at the University of Tennessee, founded the 13-30 Corporation in 1971 to publish magazines that would appeal to the 13-to-30 age group, with an emphasis on providing advice to those just getting out of high school or college.

After falling more than a million dollars into debt, 13-30 says it now has \$10 million in annual sales. And in the next three years, with the Esquire purchase, the owners expect it to be worth \$40 million.



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Phillip Moffitt, left, and Christopher Whittle announcing acquisition of Esquire. Mr. Whittle, the chairman of the board and publisher.